KPOV **–** *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“Gardening on the Cheap”

April 2, 2019

There are some great old expressions that delight my cheap soul – the English like to say: watch the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves. Americans sing that: The best things in life are free. And forty years ago when I moved to Oregon, I heard: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Since the gardening season is seriously underway, this is a good time to decide which cheap gardening tricks and shortcuts we can use this summer to save money.

Some of them are easy and some take more effort. But all of these tips will bring the same result - a fat wallet which could mean you can buy something usually beyond your budget!

1. **Grow from seeds.** There *is* the upfront cost of lights, pots and planting mix but you can use them for years. You’ll get a lot more plants – some packets have 100 seeds so you’ll have enough to trade with friends and get a wider variety. In the fall, if plants didn’t show signs of disease, just clean your pots with soap and water. If there was any kind of disease, wash and then rinse them in a bucket of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. To save even more, sprout seeds in newspaper rolled over a can into cylinders or in plastic cartons with holes punched in the bottom for water drainage.
2. **Buy smaller plants.** If you’re not the impatient type, buying smaller plants – a 4-inch pot instead of 1 gallon or a 1 gallon instead of a 5 – will save you quite a bit and in two years, they’ll grow to be the same size as the larger pot.
3. **Make compost.** This is one of those: you’ve got more time than money. Collect your kitchen scraps and garden waste and start building your own compost pile. If you’ve got your own chicken or livestock or know someone who does, mix that in for an even richer compost. Make sure you let it decompose well. A good rule of thumb is: don’t use it until you can’t recognize the animal’s bedding material.
4. **Shop sales:** Shop every sale you can find: check newspaper calendars, ask friends, ask the Master Gardeners if they are holding their plant sale. At nurseries, shop during the dog days of summer or in late fall. Some garden centers have a place for damaged plants. Choose carefully and be patient and the dried out, sunburnt or wind-whipped plants may recover in a few weeks.
5. **Save seeds.**Collecting seeds at the end of the season makes great sense. If you know you have an heirloom, you can save the seeds. If you’re not sure, you may end up with hybrids that will grow a different plant than your original.
6. **Hold a plant and seed swap.** Dig up plant “babies” or divide larger plants. Set aside some of those tomato plants you started from seed. Brew some coffee, invite some friends who have something to share and throw a party.
7. **Use recycled materials.** Garage sales, thrift shops and the newspaper’s classified pages often have gardening materials, everything from used brick and rock to pots and old tools, at incredible prices.
8. **Build your plant collection with cuttings.** Propagating by cuttings can be as hard or easy as you want to make it. Neil Bell, an Extension horticulturist, goes the easy way, and has grown thousands of plants over the years. The transcript for this show will have links to Extension publications explaining how to make cuttings.
9. **Attract beneficial insects.** Instead of reaching for chemicals or even organic products, plant things that attract beneficial insects that will eat the bad bugs and balance out your garden’s ecosystem. My resident praying mantids have kept the aphids at a manageable level for years.

For more information on this and many other gardening topics, call the Master Gardeners at 541-548-6088 or visit our website: [www.gocomga.com](http://www.gocomga.com) and click on the KPOV tab on the orange bar. This has been Gardening: Get Good at It on KPOV’s *The Point*.

Resources:

Composting: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/2015/11/clueless-about-compost-expert-shares-timely-tips>

Plants from cuttings: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/2016/10/snip-some-stems-and-have-new-plants-spring>

Eliminate pesticides: [Encouraging Beneficial Insects in Your Garden](https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/pnw550)